

### Leucistic White-fronted Bee-eater *Merops bullockoides* in Kenya

On 8 September 1990, at a small roadside earth cliff near Elsamere, on the south shore of Lake Naivasha, I was watching a group of White-fronted Bee-eaters *Merops bullockoides* at their nesting colony. I was with a group of birdwatchers, including Ken Ndarwa from Nairobi.

One of the bee-eaters was leucistic, at first glance an almost creamy-white bird which was very eye-catching. On closer examination, it was not pure or gleaming white, but very pale, dull creamy-buff or pale limestone-coloured. Its bill was brownish-grey, and the eyestripe continued the same dull brownish colour through and behind the eye. There was a rather ill-defined crescentic band of pale reddish on the chest (below the area normally so vivid red on the throat), and the central back had a tinge of pale lime-green, only visible at close range. The tail appeared to have 'fault barring' of pale and darker creamy-buff. In flight, the wings appeared all cream, with no trace of a dark trailing edge or other pattern. The primaries, and perhaps the tail feathers, were noticeably abraded. The feet were pink, the eyes dark. All the accompanying birds—about 20 of them—were perfectly normal.

Fry (1984) mentioned only six known cases of albinism among bee-eaters and only two cases described—of a creamy-white Oriental Little Green Bee-eater *M. orientalis* and a whitish Carmine Bee-eater *M. nubicus*—match the Naivasha bird in its completely pale appearance.

### Reference

FRY, C.H. 1984. *The bee-eaters*. Berkhamsted: Poyser.

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### First breeding record for Gambaga Flycatcher *Muscicapa gambagae* in East Africa

On 20 March 1990 Mel Ogola and I were looking at birds with a group of British birders on the eastern descent into the Kerio Valley at approximately 1200 m. While walking through the bush Mel Ogola called me over to look at a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* which was behaving in an agitated manner, indicating that it might have had a nest nearby. As I looked at the flycatcher it was joined by its mate and I saw that, although they very similar to a Spotted, they were actually a little smaller, browner, and the chest markings were less distinct. There appeared to be no markings on the head but, because of the behaviour of the birds, it is possible faint markings might not be seen. From the description I identified the birds as Gambaga Flycatchers *M. gambagae*—a little known species in Kenya, occurring mainly in the north and east. In the meantime, Mel Ogola had found the nest which was situated approximately 1 m above ground in the centre of a small thick thorn bush *Acacia* sp. The nest was typical of a flycatcher, very neat and tidy and it appeared to be made from fine grasses and spiders' webs, and it contained two eggs, grey-green in colour. No detailed examination of the nest or eggs was made, partly because of the inaccessibility of the nest but mainly because of the extreme agitation of the parent birds.